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A
S E R M O N

PREACH'D before

The Right WORSHIPFUL

THE

Deputy-GOVERNOUR

AND THE

Company of Merchants

TRADING to the

LEVANT SEAS:

A T

St. MARY LE BOW,

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By CHARLES BURDETT, *M. A.*

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To His Grace
JAMES Duke of *CHANDOIS*,
G O V E R N O U R,

To the Right Worshipful
WILLIAM DUNSTER, Esq;
DEPUTY-GOVERNOUR,

And to the
Company of Merchants
TRADING to the

LEVANT SEAS,
This S E R M O N,

Preached by their ORDER,
A N D
Published at their COMMAND,
Is most humbly Dedicated,
By their most Obliged
and most obedient Servant,

Charles Burdett.

TO THE
JAMES D. B. OF CHICAGO

C. O. V. R. N. O. R.

TO THE EDITOR

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PROVERBS III. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantry, and all her Paths are Peace.



IN order to frame a lively and just Image of HAPPINESS, we must clear up our Mistakes concerning it, by throwing off the Veil, which the Degeneracy and Corruption of human Nature have drawn over it, and by viewing it in that fair Point of Light, which sound Reason, and an unbyassed Understanding represent it in. For though it is the main Scope and Design of all our Actions, and we are naturally averse, or inclined to what we apprehend will promote, or endanger it; yet we, but too often, either make use of improper Means to accomplish this advantageous End, or eagerly pursue, what in the Event proves a pernicious Satisfaction: Evil comes recommended to us under the Disguise of Good,

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Good, and true Felicity shocks us with the Appearance of Misfortune. Mankind, upon this Account, have indulged a strong Antipathy to the Practice of Religious Duties, as if Religion and Misery were synonymous Terms, and to be Good was of Consequence to be Unhappy.

FOR wicked Persons are ready enough to own, That a Vertuous Life will meet with the greatest Recompence hereafter, yet they are kept back from engaging in it, out of a groundless Supposition, that it interferes so much with their Temporal Convenience and Advantage, as wholly to destroy them, that, whatever Fate may attend them in the World to come, they have taken the most effectual Methods of securing to themselves all present Blessings, so will not resign the Enjoyments of this Life for Reversionary ones in the next.

INTEREST therefore being so strong a Byass upon the Actions of most Men, and their external Happiness in this World what they have chiefly in View, it may not be a Motive unsuccessfully urged to bring them into a Religious Course of Life, if they could be once thoroughly persuaded, that Religion is the surest Way to promote both their Temporal Interest and Happiness.

AND the wisest among the Sons of Men has, to this Purpose, put together a Collection
of

of Excellent Precepts, in which he hath elegantly set forth Vertue in its native Beauty, and Vice in its true Deformity, opposing the fatal Consequences of the One to the happy End of the Other. And as *Honour, Riches* and *Pleasure* are the three Idols, which Mankind in all Ages, have erected, and paid Homage to; he hath applied himself to their own worldly Notions, and enforced these Considerations, as a proper Argument to incite them to the Practice of Virtue and Piety, shewing it to be productive of every Thing that is *Honourable, Advantageous* or *Pleasant* in the World. He, at once, breaks the Force of their Objection, by assuring them, That Religion, or, as it is termed in this Book, Wisdom, instead, (according to an Opinion they had all along entertained) of being a Bar to Preferment, if they would (a) *exalt her*, would *promote* them; and will *bring them to Honour*, when they *embrace her*; that, instead of being inconsistent with an Affluence of Fortune, by her, (b) *their Barns will be filled with Plenty*, and their *Presses will burst out with new Wine*; and that, instead of being an Enemy to Ease and Delight, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace*.

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(a) Prov. iii. 10.

(b) Prov. iv. 8.

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AN astonishing Doctrine this may seem to some and contradictory to itself; that what enjoins *Humility* and *Self-Denial* should bring along with it *Honour* and *Pleasure*: But yet upon a close and impartial Examination it will appear an undeniable Truth.

To convince ourselves therefore thoroughly of it, let us, first, take a Survey of the *Principles*, which both *Religious* and *Wicked* Men act upon, and then observe, how necessarily *some* or *all* of *these* tend, both in a *Moral* and *Natural* Sense, to promote or ruin the Happiness of Publick Societies, and Private Persons, as they respect either the Repose of their Mind, their Health, Estate, or Reputation. If this Argument can be clearly made out, I hope, we shall acknowledge what *Solomon* in the Words of my *Text* asserts of Religion, to be true, and with him jointly affirm, That *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*

MEN under the Influence of *Religious Principles* look up to GOD in all their Actions, and depend upon his Providence in every Undertaking; they consider the AUTHOR of their Being, as the Fountain of their Happiness, that those Blessings, they are either possessed or deprived of, are by his Gift or Permission, as the Effects of his Goodness to encourage their Virtue, or as the Effects of his

his Justice to punish their Offences. They receive them therefore with Thankfulness, and resign them with Content. But *as for the Ungodly it is not so with them*, They act without any View to a Supreme BEING; sunk in worldly Cares, they *will not seek after GOD*, GOD *is not in all their Thoughts*; they rely on *the Arm of Flesh*, and on all Occasions have Recourse to it, without any Regard to his over-ruling Providence, as if they neither desired his Protection, nor could suffer by his withdrawing it; as if they neither wanted his Goodness, nor feared his Justice. The Advantages of Life, and other Measures of his Bounty they ungratefully ascribe to their own Power, and the Might of their Hand for procuring, yet murmur against Him, if they are not continued and increased. In their Prosperity they forget Him, and in their Adversity they revile Him.

THE Rules of *Religion* likewise oblige Men to treat their Fellow-Creatures with Equity and Good-nature and behave themselves becomingly towards them under every Circumstance and Relation of Life; in keeping strictly to their Words and Contracts, proceeding honestly in their Dealings with those they Correspond, by giving *to* all their Due, and exacting no more *from* all; in Rejoycing at their Success and Redressing their Grievances; in shewing Loyalty to their Sovereign, paying Obedience to their Parents, acting with

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Fidelity

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Fidelity towards their Friends; and, in short, governing themselves by that Golden Rule, *Of doing unto all Men, as they would be don unto.* What Men keep free from these Duties, or Restraints, as they are called, of Religion, but those, who are for breaking through all the Laws of Justice and Humanity, and, without any Fear of Punishment, would Defraud and Over-reach the rest of the World, and injure their Properties, when such a Practice suits best with their Schemes? Who, but such, as have too much Pride for Compassion, or too much Envy to admire? But such, as are so Self-interested, as to consider themselves under no Capacity, besides that of promoting their own Advantage, and regard nothing but what may be serviceable to their own Designs and Enjoyments?

NOR do they consider, with Men who govern themselves by *Religious Principles*, what Actions are most suitable to the excellent Faculties which, as Rational Creatures, they are endowed with; how much better it is to oppose the Usurpation of Lusts and Passions, and preserve themselves from paying a servile Obedience to them; to let Humility and Content be the governing Principle, instead of Avarice and Ambition; to curb the Impetuosity of a vicious and corrupt Desire, rather than to wanton in Voluptuousness and Incontinence; and to subdue the Violence of Rage and Anger, rather than to sacrifice every
 Thing

Thing to a Spirit of Revenge. Upon such opposite Principles do Men addicted to a virtuous or vicious Course of Life proceed. These are endeavouring to gratify all their Inclinations, those to conquer them. GOD and the World, Conscience and Passion, Reason and Appetite are the contrary Springs of Religious and Wicked Mens Actions. How differently they conduce to the Happiness or Misery of publick Societies, and private Persons, both in a *Moral* and *Natural* Sense, is what I proposed, in the

SECOND Place, to shew. *For Righteousness, saith Solomon (c), exalteth a Nation, but Sin is the Reproach of any People; and, (d), By the Blessing of the Upright the City is exalted; but it is overthrown by the Mouth of the Wicked.* And that Vertue or Vice will *Morally* bring Plagues or Blessings upon any Community may be proved from a Consideration of GOD's Justice, and confirmed to us by Experience. As Governor of the Universe, He takes a different Method with States and Kingdoms, from what He exercises towards private Men, in shewing his Approbation and Displeasure by Rewards and Punishments. Particular Persons, whether Good or Bad, may promiscuously taste the Comforts and Afflictions of *this* Life, because there is *another* State, in which their Actions will be attended with their

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deserved

(c) Prov. xiv. 34.

(d) Ibid. xi. 11.

deserved Consequences. But the Duration of Publick Societies is limited, and Bodies of Men, as such, will one Day be dissolved, and swallowed up in the general Ruin: GOD must therefore manifest his Justice in regard to them either in this World, or not at all.

OF this the *Jewish* Nation was a very signal and instructive Instance, who experienced the various Dispensations of Divine Providence, and found them at all Times, adapted to the Uprightness or Perverseness of their Ways. Their Rewards and Punishments, their Felicities and Calamities increased in Proportion to their Murmurs and Gratitude, to their Obedience and Transgressions.

BUT as Virtue and Vice draw down Curses and Blessings from *Heaven* upon Publick Societies, so do they *naturally* bring them. Justice and Honesty cause Mankind to proceed in their Intercourses between each other with mutual Security and Dependance; whereas the contrary Practice gives Rise to Jealousies and Suspicions. A Course of Sobriety keeps Men in a fit Condition to perform the Part assigned them in the Commonwealth; but irregular Habits disable them and their Posterity from being serviceable in it. Content and Diligence in a Calling advance the Happiness of all about us by a due Care of that Trust, and Function we are engaged in. But what can be the Effects
of

of an ambitious and envious Spirit, which is perpetually endeavouring to start out of the Bounds prescribed it, but Disorder and Confusion? For such a Turn of Temper not only makes a Man remiss in his *Own* Duty, but it interrupts others in the Discharge of *Theirs*.

INDEED, *Moral* and *Natural Good*, or *Evil* are so closely connected together, and GOD hath so strongly fenced in his own Laws with the *natural* Rewards and Punishments, which adhere to them, that we cannot be guilty of an Offence towards Him, without injuring, at the same time, the Civil Rights of our Neighbour. In *all* Ages therefore, and under *every* Government the Laws of Religion and Morality have been *publickly* enforced, strict Injunctions have been exhibited to observe the Rules of Justice and Sobriety, and the Breach of them has been severely punished, for the better Security of Mens Lives, and Liberties, and external Possessions. The highest Advantages and Conveniences accrue from them, and the utmost Confusions and Misfortunes would attend the contrary Vices. Which let us now suppose to be under the Sanction of the Law, and Vertue as much discouraged in our Courts of Judicature, as Vice at present, is.

LET a Spirit of Revenge and Murder universally rage; let Oppression and Violence usurp the Seat of Justice; let Lewdness and Intemperance, Debauchery and Profaneness be
publickly

publickly allowed of; and see, if we should not quickly groan and faint under the insupportable Burden. What would then become of our Rights, and Liberties, and Quiet? Must they not be sacrificed to Cruelty, Injustice, and Impiety? When our (e) *Hedges* are broken down, all they which pass by, would pluck our *Vines*. The Boar out of the Wood would waste it, and the wild Beast out of the Field devour it. (f) *Lamentation and bitter Weeping* would be heard in our Streets, as in *Ramah*, and Mothers, like *Rachel Weeping* for their Children, because they are not. In such a State we could expect little better, than that our Sons and our Daughters must be offered to Devils. Experience therefore, would to our Sorrow, convince us of the fatal Effects of such a licentious Indulgence.

WOULD we enjoy the Benefits of an Happy Government, let us then remember, that *Religion* and *Virtue* alone can procure them for us; and whenever we are transgressing their Rules, we are, in some Degree, breaking in upon the Peace and Order of the World.

BUT were the good and bad Consequences of Virtue and Vice to terminate here, Men might with some shew of Reason transgress the Bounds of their Duty, under Pretence of complying with a Principle of Self-love. That the Folly therefore of the Wicked may be left

(e) Psalm lxxx. 12, 13.

(f) Jer. xxxi. 15.

left without any Excuse, let us observe, how greatly *Religion* and *Vice*, both in a *Moral* and *Natural* Sense, conduce to the Happiness and Misery of every Private Person. And

First, IN promoting or destroying the Ease and Quiet of his Mind. (g) *Keep sound Wisdom, faith Solomon, and Discretion; so when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy Sleep shall be sweet.* Whereas the Wicked is assured, That when he says, (h) *his Bed shall comfort him, his Couch shall ease his Complaint: Then GOD scareth him with Dreams, and terrifieth him through Visions, For Shame and Confusion of Face belongeth to the Sinner; (i) Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil. But Peace to every Man, that worketh Good. (k) A Good Man, the Scripture too tells us, shall be satisfied from himself, and the Work of Righteousness shall be Peace, (l) and the Effects of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever.*

ALL which is no less true in a *Natural* Sense. For *Patience* and *Submission* to the *Divine Will* eases our *Minds*, and abates the *Edge of Sorrows*; whereas *Murmuring* and *Impatience* fret the *Heart*, and increase the *Weight of Afflictions*. A much greater Sweetness

(g) Prov. iii. 21, 24.

(i) Rom. ii. 9, 10.

(l) Isa. xxxii. 17.

(h) Job vii. 13, 14.

(k) Prov. xiv. 14.

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ness flows from Love and the Forgiveness of Injuries, than from the restless Fury and perpetual Tumults of a *malicious* and *revengeful* Spirit. A *wicked* Course of Life gives a Man frequent Troubles and Perplexities with the Remembrance of *former* Actions, and with the Dread of *future* Sufferings. But *Piety*, *Justice*, and *Sobriety*, I believe, hardly ever troubled any one. A Man of *Religion* may cast an Eye back upon his past Actions without the least Mixture of Sorrow or Remorse. He can retire within himself, and behold all *there* calm and peaceable; having ever acted upon *sound*, *true* Principles, and therefore free from all uneasy Apprehensions of Punishment and Disgrace.

OH! the sweet Repose, the Ease and Tranquillity of Mind, which *He* enjoys, who has neither his *Reason*, to reproach him, his *Conscience* to sting him, nor his GOD to condemn him. He surely, has received deep into his Breast that Divine *Peace which passeth all Understanding*, that *Joy which is unspeakable, and full of Glory*. A Stranger, alas; to the Breast of the *Ungodly*, where the Gnawing of that *Worm, which dieth not*, supplies its place.

As the Enjoyments of a *wicked* Man are of a different Nature from *those*, his Reflections upon them must, of Consequence be so to. He therefore dreads and avoids holding

ing any Conversation with his Conscience. But it will unwelcomely intrude upon him, when he least looks, and least cares for it, in his *greatest Privacy*. When he has no jovial Companions to laugh it away, nor wanton Mistress to lull it asleep. It will there display the Black Catalogue of his Vices, and convince him, how he is become, by their Means, *a Scorn and Derision to them round about him*, and a Mark of Vengeance to an incensed G O D.

WERE these the only Pleasures or Miseries which Men escaped or enjoyed by *Religion* or *Immorality*, they surely, might be induced to purchase them at the Expence of every other Satisfaction; and to think no Ways *pleasant* or *disagreeable*, but what lead *to*, or *from* such Peace. Though the Duties of Religion are consistent with *every Part* of our Happiness, and in performing or transgressing them we both *Morally* and *naturally* improve, or prejudice no less the Outward than the Inward Man; as may be seen.

Secondly, IN regard to our Health. And this Blessing from the Consideration of G O D's Justice only, we might reasonably have expected to be a Reward consequent on Actions framed by the Standard of Temperance and Sobriety, had we received no revealed Promises of it. But Holy Scripture abounds with Assurances of this Kind to encourage Men in a prudent and regular Government of their Bodies. *Fear the LORD, with the Wise Man (m),*
C and

(m) Prov. iii. 7, 8. 16, 19.

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and depart from Evil. It shall be Health to thy Navel and Marrow to thy Bones. Length of Days is in her Right Hand, and a Tree of Life she is to them that lay hold upon her. Whereas Curses on the contrary are denounced against Sinners, and a long Continuance even of Life itself denied them. For the Wicked shall be cut off from the Earth, and the Transgressors shall be rooted out of it (n).

THE Principles, indeed, of Religion oblige us to such Moderation and Sobriety, enjoyn such a regular Behaviour, and such an Equanimity of Temper, as will effectually eradicate all those Excesses of Lust and Intemperance, and those Transports of headstrong and unruly Passions, which have such a Physical Efficacy in sowing the Seeds of Diseases, either by corrupting or weakning the Constitution, putting the Humours of the Body into so violent an Agitation, or by throwing the whole Frame of Nature into so great a Disorder as to render it incapable of performing its proper and necessary Operations. And whom does Experience shew us to be most liable to Diseases, but such, as are most addicted to Anger and Revenge, to Vice and Debauchery, but such, as *walk in Rioting and Drunkenness in Chambering and Wantonness*. And whom, on the other Side, do we find most free from Distempers, but those, who are careful of not launching beyond moderate Bounds in satisfying their Hunger and Thirst,

(n) Prov. ii. 22.

Thirst, and other Appetites and Desires, nor of indulging the Extravagance and Heat of any Passion; but preserve an even Turn of Temper in every Circumstance and Relation of Life. For why does the Blood flow in a *regular* Current, why are the Members of the Body firm and sound, the Limbs strong and active, the Tone of the Vessels in a right Order, and the Appetite and Digestion in a due Capacity to perform the Calls of Nature, but that they have not been over-run by those *pernicious* Enemies, Lust and Luxury.

DISEASES, indeed, *may*, and *do* happen to the *Best* of Men, as well as the *Worst*. Their Constitutions may be of so weak and tender a Frame, as to be shaken with the smallest Blast, or they may be negligent in pursuing right Methods of preserving their Health, But yet we may observe, that they seldom are afflicted with such Diseases as hang about Men of *lewd* and *corrupt* Manners, that have abandoned themselves to Sensuality and Voluptuousness. *Who hath Wo? who hath Sorrow? who hath Wounds without Cause? Who hath Redness of Eyes? They, saith the Wise Man, that tarry long at the Wine* (o). And so, indeed, should I run thro' the whole Train of Vices, I could shew the fatal Inconveniencies, that particularly attended each of them. But every one is so daily an Eye-witness of this, that it would be needless to dwell longer on so melancholy an Object.

(o) Prov. xxiii. 29, 30.

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LET us therefore proceed to shew, That Esteem and Veneration, or the contrary Treatment among Men will be the *Moral* and *Natural* Effects of a *Religious* or *Wicked* Life.

THUS it is said of *Judith*, That *there was none that gave her an ill Word, for she feared GOD greatly* (p). Let not then *Mercy and Truth forsake thee, so shalt thou find Favour and good Understanding in the Sight of GOD and Man* (q). And, He that in these Things, saith the Apostle (r), *serveth CHRIST is acceptable to GOD, and approved of Men*. But Shame is set down in Scripture as the proper Consequence of Sin. *A wicked Man is loathsome and cometh to Shame* (s).

AND Experience convinces us what Weight and Authority a Man of *Religion* and *Honesty* bears in the World, even among Persons of a loose and profligate Turn; how readily his Opinion is assented to, and his Word relied on without Hesitation. Of all the ancient Heathen Lawgivers *Numa* was held in greatest Reverence among the People he presided over, and had his Laws received and executed with the utmost Submission, for that Mark of Divinity and Piety he stamped upon *Them*, and his *own Person*, by Means of a familiar Inter-course he pretended to entertain with a Deity. And in all Ages the Men most celebrated for their Virtue have been the most valued and honoured. As for the common Slander of *Hypocrisy*

(p) Judg. viii. 8.

(r) Rom. xiv. 18.

(q) Prov. iii. 3, 4.

(s) Prov. xiii. 5.

pocrisy and *pious Craft*, that is frequently thrown upon Men, who more strictly and conscientiously perform their Duties, than is usual with the greater Part of the World; so far, I think, should it be from discouraging them from persisting in such laudable Practices, or deterring others from coming into them, that they should rather be induced by it to forward such an Undertaking. Since this very *Suspicion* is a *silent Acknowledgment*, that if they were *thought* as *sincerely Good*, as they appeared to be, they could not but meet with a suitable Respect and Reverence from the World.

RELIGION and Vice do, *Lastly*, in a *Moral* and *Natural* Sense, conduce to the Happiness and Misery of every private Person by increasing or impairing his Fortune. For GOD sends a peculiar Blessing on the Industry of a *Just Man*, and crowns it with Success. *The Steps of a Good Man are ordered by the LORD, and he delighteth in his Way* (t). And if we will commit our *Way* unto the LORD, and trust in him, *He will bring it to pass* (u). Whereas an *Inheritance* may be gotten hastily at the Beginning; but the End thereof shall not be blessed (x). And, *Wealth* gotten by *Vanity* shall be diminished (y). But the Blessing of the LORD it maketh rich, and he addeth no Sorrow with it (z).

BUT

(t) Psal. xxxvii. 23. (u) Ibid. ver. 5. (x) Prov. x. 11. (y) Prov. xiii. 11. (z) Ibid, x. 22.

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BUT *Religion* naturally conduces to the Increase of Mens Fortunes, as it engages them to be diligent in their Callings; for *the Hand of the Diligent maketh rich* (a). Such a Course of Life learns Men Prudence and Oeconomy in *preserving* the Estate they are possessed of, it moderates their Expences, and restrains them within the due Bounds of Frugality. But *Religion* puts them into the surest and most lasting Art of Thriving by obliging them to use all Truth and Fidelity in their Commerce. For though fraudulent Practices may not be at the first discovered, and they may therefore for a little while be attended with Success, yet it has been seldom known, that Deceit and Treachery have kept themselves long concealed. Whoever therefore makes *this* the Rule of his Dealing, pursues a Course, which most effectually tends to sink his Fortune, by destroying his Credit. Such a Man's *Riches*, certainly, *make themselves Wings*, nay, he himself giveth them Wings, *and they fly away*. For his Designs are no sooner exposed, but they necessarily engage Mankind to stand upon their Guard, and be aware of him. He, like *Cain*, hath a Mark set on him, and must shortly, like him, become a *Fugitive and a Vagabond in the Earth*. Thus is he *taken in the Devices that he hath imagined* (b), and is *snared in the Work of his own Hands* (c). Blessed then is the Man
that

(a) Prov. x. 4.

(b) Psal. x. 2.

(c) Ibid. ix. 16.

that walketh not in such Counsel; but in the Law of Justice doth meditate Day and Night. He shall be like a Tree planted by the Rivers of Water, that bringeth forth his Fruit in due Season; his Leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper (d).

Now what do the several Principles of Religion oblige us to, but to the Practice of such Duties, as produce Harmony in the World, bring a quiet and calm Conscience along with them, and every Way promote our Welfare and Interest: But such as regulate our Will and Affections, and keep our Passions within due Subjection to our superior Faculties? And what do they restrain us from, but from the Commission of such Vices, as would raise Horror and Remorse in the Conscience, press down the Mind with Anguish and Vexation, blow up Discord in the Affections, swell the Body with Diseases, prejudice our Interests, and scatter Confusion and Distraction through human Societies. They neither enjoyn nor forbid any thing, but what our own Self-love, rightly directed, would force us to follow, or avoid. Our Duty, in short, is *every way* our Happiness. So that to live *Soberly, Righteously, and Godly* in this World, is to live in it with *Joy, and Peace, and Comfort*, to make ourselves and all about us as easy and as happy as we can, and to pursue the

(c) Psal. i. 1, 2, 3.

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the truest Methods of improving our Health,
our Reputation, and our Fortune.

GOD therefore grant, That we may guide
all our Actions so conscientiously by the Rules
of Religion, that we may enjoy such an e-
qual Serenity and Calmness of Mind, as may
keep us secure from all Anxieties, which are
consequent on *ill Deeds*; That in all our In-
tercourses with Men, we may use such honest
and fair Dealing, as may bring down GOD'S
Blessing on our Endeavours, *and keep ourselves*
unspotted from the World, and, that our Lives
and Behaviour may be so well formed by the
Rules of Decency, Temperance, and Chastity,
as may preserve the Constitution of our Bodies
in full Strength and Vigor, and enable all their
Faculties to perform their several Functions,
and that we may enjoy the *Pleasure* of well-
doing in *this* World, and obtain the glorious
Reward promised to it in the *next*.

To God the Father, God the Son, and God
the Holy Ghost be ascribed all Glory,
Praise, Power, and Dominion now,
henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.



F I N I S.

